

## CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1 - 8. (canceled)

1           9. (currently amended) An apparatus for heat-treating a  
2 steel workpiece, the apparatus comprising:

3           a longitudinally extending furnace;

4           a longitudinally extending partition [[means]]  
5 subdividing an interior of the furnace into two longitudinally  
6 extending and transversely adjacent zones;

7           means for heating one of the zones to a substantially  
8 higher treatment temperature than the other of the zones; and

9           transport means for conveying the workpiece  
10 longitudinally through the furnace generally parallel to the  
11 partition with a region of the workpiece moving exclusively through  
12 the one zone and another region of the workpiece moving exclusively  
13 through the other of the zones such that the regions are heated to  
14 different temperatures.

1           10. (currently amended) The heat-treatment apparatus  
2 defined in claim 9 wherein the partition [[means]] includes a  
3 longitudinally extending upper partition above the transport means  
4 and a longitudinally extending lower partition below the transport  
5 means and vertically aligned with the upper partition, the upper  
6 and lower partitions defining a transversely open gap through which  
7 the transport means extends.

1           11. (currently amended) The heat-treatment apparatus  
2 defined in claim 10 wherein at least one of the upper and lower  
3 partitions is displaceable transversely through a plurality of  
4 different transversely offset positions.

1           12. (original) The heat-treatment apparatus defined in  
2 claim 11 wherein there are a plurality of the lower partitions  
3 transversely offset from each other and the upper partition is  
4 displaceable transversely through positions aligned with each of  
5 the lower partitions.

1           13. (currently amended) The heat-treatment apparatus  
2 defined in claim 12 wherein the partition [[means]] includes  
3 a middle longitudinally extending partition aligned  
4 vertically between the upper and lower partitions, the transport  
5 means displacing the middle partition through the furnace with the  
6 workpiece.